Other Resources: Educational, Funerary, and Religious

We have focused in this report on the rural domestic and agricultural resources of Marion and Washington Counties. The survey data is broader than that, as discussed on page 19, and readers interested in finding out more about any of the surveyed resources are invited to consult the survey files at the Heritage Council. For the purposes of this report we will briefly look at just a few of them, namely schools, cemeteries, churches, and shrines.

Figure 320: *MN 549, African-American School House, early twentieth century, Belltown vicinity.*

Schools

Of the fewer than 20 schools surveyed in this project, we have one African-American schoolhouse, several with religious affiliations, some one and two-room examples from the early twentieth century, and some more modern multi-room schools. The African-American school, MN 549 (Figure 320) has been moved twice according to its present owner. It was originally near present-day Saint Charles School (Figure 323), was moved near the present location, and then later moved a short distance to where it stands now. Its history is a little unclear, it was said to have been active in the 1950s, so it is possible that it became an African American school after the first move, depending on when that happened. It currently has an attached carport and is used

as a shop or utility building. It still has a bank of standard school windows under the later carport.

Early schools that still stand tend to have one to four rooms. A two room example is found at WS 729, and closely resembles a house (Figure 321). Later schools began to distinguish themselves architecturally from other types of buildings, such as the four-room school house at Gravel Switch (Figure 322). But the biggest change in school design came in the twentieth century, as public education was formalized and consolidated. Larger, multi-room schools began to be constructed in Kentucky by the early twentieth century, but the earliest examples still standing in the survey area date to the 1930s, when the Works Progress Administration built many schools throughout the state such as the Bradfordsville School (Figure 325). By the late 1940s, more sprawling campuses with gymnasiums and educational buildings in modern styles began to appear (Figure 323). The survey region with its strong Catholic population also saw the construction of a number of private religious schools, such as the Fredericktown Elementary School, later purchased by the local school board and used as a public school (Figure 324).

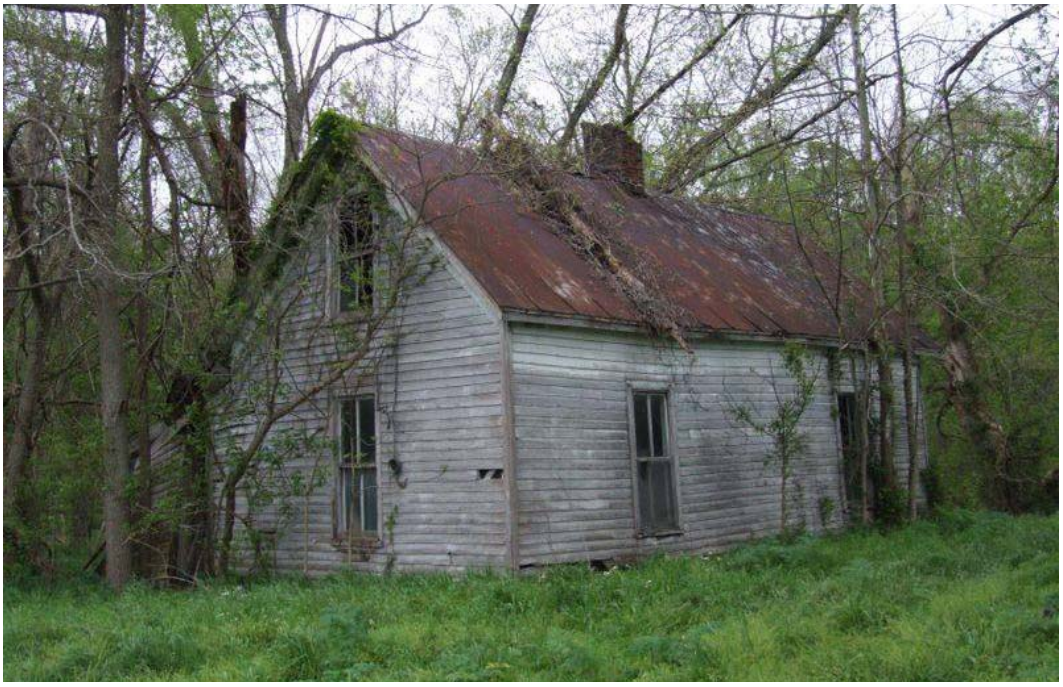

Figure 321: *WS 729, School House, early twentieth century, Litsey.*

Figure 322: *MN 671, Gravel Switch School, early twentieth century.*

Figure 323: *MN 562, Saint Charles Middle School, 1949, with recent renovations by rosstarrant architects, Lebanon vicinity.*

Figure 324: *WS 341, Fredericktown Elementary School, 1962.*

Figure 325: *MN 43, Bradfordsville School, 1936.*

Cemeteries

Cemeteries include several related resource types, the principal ones including the family cemetery (Figure 326 and Figure 328); the cemetery for members of a particular organization (Figure 327), most typically a church, but also for groups such as the Odd Fellows, or a branch of the military; and the community cemetery (Figure 329). The types of cemeteries themselves come in a variety of guises: the community cemetery might be on ground actually owned by a community, land donated for public use, or it might be a privately owned, for-profit cemetery. It might be very park-like and pleasant, or it might be a pauper's field where the indigent are buried with insubstantial markers. A family cemetery might be a small one associated with a particular farm, such as the Pile cemetery at WS 27 (Figure 326), or a multi-family affair that is shared by several people in a particular area, such as the Weatherford cemetery (Figure 328). Slaves were often buried in a separate location, but are also in the cemeteries of their owner families, typically with unmarked or minimally marked grave sites (many may have been marked with wooden markers and the like which no longer survive).

Gravestones in cemeteries (Figure 327) are a subject worthy of in depth study. They of course hold important genealogical information of special interest to descendents of the deceased, and they also are of interest as examples of artistic production. Historic gravestones were typically produced locally, and so gravestones are important sources in the study of regional artistic

production. There is a wealth of symbolism on gravestones that can vary with the religious, ethnic, and social associations of the deceased.[53]

Many cemeteries fall into ruin when they have not been used for several generations or when descendents are too distant in time or space to have a strong association with the site. The documentation of cemeteries is an important preservation activity – knowing the location of a cemetery can avoid costly delays that occur when one is discovered in the advanced stages of a project. The information in cemeteries is of tremendous interest for genealogy, and the posting of that information on internet sites has made it possible to reach out to descendents who were unaware of the sites existence or location. This in turn can promote local tourism.

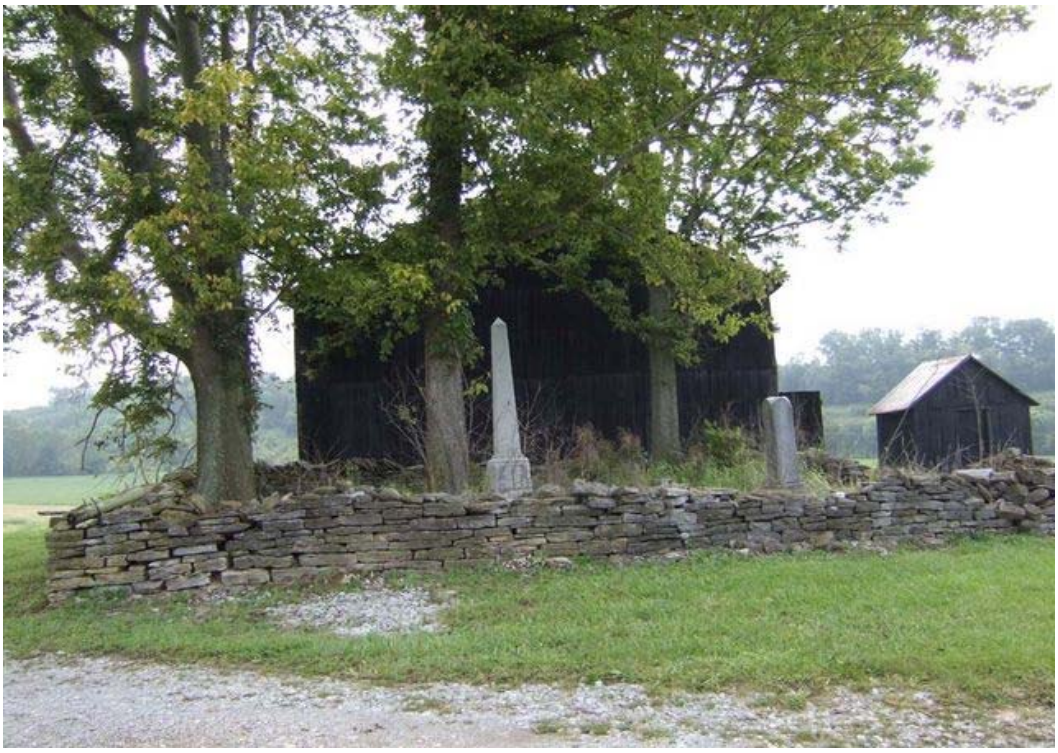

Figure 326: *WS 27, Cemetery, Maud. This cemetery is located at the Benjamin Pile House, a previously surveyed National Register listed property (see Figure 25). Benjamin Pile's 1851 grave is here, along with his wife, members of his family, and later descendents. Family cemeteries were often surrounded by stone fences to keep livestock out.*

[53] See, for example, Douglas Keister: Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2004).

Figure 327: WS 448**,** *Mt. Zion Cemetery, near Willisburg. Left, gravestone of two infant Wayne children, died 1875. Right: gravestone of DR. A.B. Hays. Dr Hays died of yellow fever in Plaquemine Parish, Louisiana, in 1854. The square and the compass is a Masonic symbol. According to a local informant, Joe Bodine, Mt. Zion cemetery is a free cemetery. There was a church associated with the site that no longer stands.*

Figure 328: *MN 645, Weatherford Cemetery, a large family cemetery in a dramatic hilltop setting, Pleasant Valley.*

Figure 329: *MN 918, Old Liberty Cemetery, Bradfordsville Vicinity. A rural community cemetery with a park-like layout.*

Churches

Marion and Washington counties are rich in historic religious sites from small country churches to large religious institutions such as the St Catherine's campus which includes St. Catherine's College, St. Catherine's Farm, and the Dominican Sister's Motherhouse. Larger institutions such as St. Catherine's and earlier ones such as Holy Cross (MN 13, Figure 330) tended to be already included in the existing survey, as were those of great architectural presence such as the Pleasant Run Methodist Church of 1898 (Figure 331), a lovely late Gothic style brick church now vacant, but still in restorable condition. Holy Cross actually began as a side-entry church, what is known as a Meeting House plan – the side entry is just visible in Figure 330. It was later converted to a gable entry plan, much like that found at Pleasant Run. The steeple may also have been added at that time. Both Holy Cross and Pleasant Run reflect the fact that churches are often among the more stylish buildings constructed, as we have also seen at WS 940 (Figure 118), the Holy Rosary church in Springfield. In general, though, more highly stylized historic churches are more likely to be found in towns rather than in isolated rural areas.

The churches newly added to the inventory in the RHDI survey are mainly the smaller and plainer rural examples, and twentieth century town churches. Many of the rural examples are simple frame buildings with gable entries, and not a lot of architectural detail, such as Kedron Methodist Church, near Gravel Switch (Figure 332). One of the major variations on this form is

that some have two entrances, which often, but not always reflects the presence of two aisles inside, such as Mount Zion Church of Christ (Figure 333). Where these plainer churches tend to have more elaboration is trough the addition of a steeple, as we see at the Battle Baptist Church (Figure 334). The tradition of the small rural church continues well into the recent past, as at Arbuckle Baptist Church (Figure 335), which replaced an earlier building in 1967. Larger rural churches do exist of course, as at Bethlehem Baptist church (Figure 336).

Figure 330: *MN 13, Holy Cross Catholic Church, 1824.*

Churches in towns tend to serve larger congregations and thus tend to be larger and more elaborate architecturally. The Mackville Methodist Episcopal Church is a good example of this (Figure 337). In some cases, we find town churches to be simple in form, but quite large in size, as at the United Methodist Church of Gravel Switch (Figure 338), a good example of stone-faced concrete block construction. Gravel Switch is a small town, but is also home to another fairly large church, the Gravel Switch Baptist Church of 1952 (Figure 120).

Like other historic resources, churches are often endangered, most typically when they fall into disuse. Substantial brick churches such as Pleasant Methodist Church (Figure 331) may stand for some time, but the plainer frame churches tend not to fair so well. For example, the Ealy Chapel

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in the Litsey/Poortown area, which the author documented in the early 1990s, was sadly found to be a fallen ruin in the current survey. In some cases, rural churches are reused as agricultural buildings, as at the former Methodist Church in Maud (Figure 339), which was used for a time as a tobacco barn, but which now faces an uncertain future. A happier story is the Bradfordsville Christian Church, which has been converted to a performing arts center for the community (Figure 340).

Figure 331: *MN 95, Pleasant Run Methodist Church, 1898.*

Figure 332: *MN 663, Kedron Methodist Church, late nineteenth century.*

Figure 333: *WS 912, Mount Zion Church of Christ, 1914, Battle Vicinity.*

Figure 334: *WS 913, Battle Baptist Church, 1904.*

Figure 335: *MN 709, Arbuckle Baptist Church, 1967, Greenbriar vicinity.*

Figure 336: *WS 880, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1940, Texas vicinity.*

Figure 337: *WS 53, Mackville Methodist Episcopal Church, 1920.*

Figure 338: *MN 668, United Methodist Church, Gravel Switch, 1914.*

Figure 339: *WS 263, Maud Methodist Church, late nineteenth-early twentieth century.*

Figure 340: *MN 926, Bradfordsville Christian Church (now Bradfordsville Performing Arts center), late nineteenth century.*

Shrines

One of the many characteristic features of the rural landscape of Marion, Washington, and several surrounding counties is the presence of numerous shrines depicting Jesus or the Virgin Mary, often nestled in a small rock grotto or surrounded by a bathtub serving as a *mandorla*, a niche or framing surround for the statue (Figure 341). While most of the shrines are not historic, being less than fifty years old, they are a reflection of the strong Catholic heritage of the RHDI region. Many of these shrines are private memorials set up as landscape features, typically in the front yard of a house, visible from the roadway.

On a much larger scale is the Valley Hill Shrine (Figure 342), a roadside feature with several statues of Jesus, Mary, and angels, a well with "Holy Water" (with a sign warning not to drink it), a picnic area, and a gravesite with a 1999 burial. A sign at the site informs visitors that "Mother Mary Visits us on the 2nd & 23rd of Each Month at Approximately 3:00 PM and on Sundays." The origins of the site date to 1995 when "seven young girls and their Catholic education teacher … reported seeing spots of gold and even getting pictures of angels and the

Virgin Mary." [54] The story was featured on the television show "Unsolved Mysteries," with a debunking of the photographs by paranormal investigator Joe Nickell.[55] For some time, large crowds visited the site hoping to witness miracles. The crowds have since diminished, but the site still has a steady stream of visitors.

Figure 341: *MN 329, Virgin Mary Shrine with Bathtub Mandorla, late twentieth century, Dant vicinity.*

Figure 342: *WS 439, Valley Hill Shrine, 1990s.*

[54] Jackie Hays, "Valley Hill Believers Continue Searching For Miracles." (WAVE 3 News Special Report, April 24th, 2003: http://www.wave3.com/Global/story.asp?S=1248075&;nav=0RZFFQp9).
[55] Joe Nickell, "Investigative Files: Miracle Photographs" (Skeptical Inquirer, March/April 1996, available at http://www.csicop.org/si/9603/miracle.html).